

# Jittery Indiana weighs school safety, rights

In wake of Parkland atrocity, Indiana schools are buffeted by threats; Gov. Holcomb opposes arming teachers

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – In the week after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre, reactions suggest a tipping point that didn't occur after the slaughters Columbine, or Virginia Tech, or Umpqua Community College, or Northern Illinois University.

There were the typical reactions. The National Rifle Association went silent for a week before Wayne LaPierre warned CPAC that Democrats are attempting a "socialist" takeover. Gun control advocates called for an assault weapon ban and universal background checks. Second Amendment advocates called for more people to carry concealed guns. Joe Scarborough railed at conservatives and polls showed widespread support for background checks and other counter-measures.

A CNN poll released Sunday showed 70% back stricter gun laws, up from 52% just after the Las Vegas



atrocity. According to a Quinnipiac Poll released last week, 66% of Americans want stricter gun control laws and 67% back a ban on assault weapons. "If you think Americans are largely unmoved by the mass shootings, you should think again," said Tim Malloy, assistant director of the

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## The modern pro tem

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**  
 First in a three-part series

INDIANAPOLIS – With the recent news that Senate President Pro Tem David Long will retire in November, journalists, lobbyists, and legislators alike are already starting to size up his legacy. For most, figuring out where Long ranks compared to other pro tems is complicated primarily by the fact that for nearly 40 years Hoosiers have only experienced two of them. What most don't realize, though, is that the history of the position – at least the modern version of it – only extends back another decade from there.

So, if you want to rank the influence of Indiana's pro



**"I firmly believe that we need to let our teachers teach and our law enforcement officials protect. There is a significant difference between teaching firearms safety, use/carry and taking a human life under tremendous stress."**

*- Gov. Eric Holcomb, to HPI on arming teachers*



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tems, your only real five options are:

**1. Phil Gutman**, the man who made the position what it is today and helped usher in some major reforms to the structure of Indiana's government during the years 1970 to 1976 (a period that saw 11 constitutional amendments adopted, nine of which changed state government);

**2. Bob Fair**, the Democrat who got his one term from 1976-1978 during the only time in the last 50 years that Democrats controlled the chamber, and who saw some of his own party turn against him by the end of the long session because they thought he wasn't hard enough on a Republican governor;

**3. Chip Edwards**, who had just settled into the position by the time he was indicted on federal bribery charges near the end of his two-year term in 1980 (and then convicted of extortion, lying to a grand jury, and corruptly influencing a grand jury witness before year's end);

**4. Bob Garton**, whose vast legacy stems as much from the deals he cut or the modernization and transparency he brought to the legislative process as it does from the length of his 1980-2006 tenure (which made him the longest serving pro tem not just in the state, but in the country); and



**5. David Long**, who has served second longest of the bunch at 12 years - about half of Garton's tenure, but twice as long as Gutman's - and whose strong but steady leadership has consistently received high marks, even while overshadowed by the personas of Governors Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence.

But others are writing comparisons between Long and his predecessors. Instead, I'll look at how leadership in the State Senate has evolved over the course of Indiana's history, and why these are ultimately the only four to compare to Long.

It was Indiana's original

constitution in 1816 that made the lieutenant governor then a separately elected office from the governor - the president of the state Senate, and along with the title gave the right to participate in floor debates and cast votes on all legislation (and to cast the tie-breaking vote in the event the vote was equally divided). Additionally, though the position was established in Article IV which defined the executive branch, the constitution made clear that the lieutenant governor was to be seen as the legislative leader in the Senate because it tied the level of compensation to that of the speaker of the House. Meanwhile, the original rules established by the State Senate gave its president the ability to create committees, assign members to each committee, assign legislation to each committee, determine bill conferees, and so on. In other words, the lieutenant governor served much the same role in the Senate as the speaker did in the House, and ran the chamber with the same level of power we associate today with the pro tem.

So, with the lieutenant governor serving as the true presiding officer of the Senate, the president pro tempore (a Latin phrase that means "for the time being") served a more ceremonial role to keep the chamber running when the lieutenant governor was absent. If there was a vacancy or extended absence in the office of lieutenant governor, the pro tem might get the chance to fulfill the role as a true presiding officer, but this was so rare that it only happened 10 times in the 95 regular sessions and 24 special sessions leading up to 1970.

Perhaps the best evidence that the pro tem was more an afterthought than a true authority figure in the Senate is that the position isn't mentioned at all in the 1816 constitution's legislative article (Article III), and is only mentioned as necessary in Article IV in the event of the absence of the lieutenant governor (and even then, the election was limited only "for that occasion"). As such, the position was treated as an afterthought, with members not being elected to the post until an absence occurred.

Even then, a pro tem wasn't likely to serve more than a day or two, and a different pro tem might be elected if the lieutenant governor missed a day the next month.

When Indiana adopted a new constitution in 1851, the contours were very much the same: The lieutenant governor was still separately elected from the Governor, was still the President of the Senate, and treated on par with the Speaker of the House; and – whether by rule or tradition – the Senate by this time accepted that it was the role of the lieutenant governor to serve as the presiding officer. But the rise of political parties in the mid-1830's meant that control wasn't always necessarily complete: If the majority party in the Senate wasn't the party the lieutenant governor belonged to, they could be expected to exert political influence to ensure their members were on the right committees and their legislation moved. Nonetheless, the pro tem was still very much an afterthought.

The first sign of trouble for this arrangement came near the end of the 1869 session as the legislature considered ratification of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to give blacks the right to vote. Democrats in both chambers resigned en masse the day the ratification vote was scheduled, preventing a quorum and ending the legislative session. Gov. Conrad Baker ordered a special election for the 54 vacant districts (37 House seats and 17 Senate seats) so that a special session could be held to address ratification. In every single one of the 54 elections, the Democrat who had resigned won back his seat, raising the prospect that the Democrats would resign again during the special session.

In fact, that's precisely what happened, and on May 13, 1869, 15 senators and 41 representatives quit on the spot - but the Republicans were prepared. When the Democrats in the Senate attempted to announce their resignations, the lieutenant governor was in the midst of a five-day absence. In his place, a freshman Republican named Isaac P. Gray was chosen to serve as pro tem, and Gray had a plan to ensure the Senate voted for ratification. As the Democrats began their walkout, Gray (pictured) ordered the doors to be barred and guarded against

anyone leaving, and he hurriedly called up the question of ratification. During the roll call, each time a Democrat's



name was called, Gray had a Republican answer, "Present, not voting." Each Democrat's vote was recorded as such. With a quorum secured and enough Republican votes to push through ratification, the deed was done.

When the Democrats objected that they hadn't actually cast votes, and there was no quorum because they had resigned, Gray gave them a chance to debate the matter on the Senate floor. After they

made their arguments, Gray cleverly noted that Senate rules only allowed sitting members of the Senate to participate in floor debate, and thus their participation proved they hadn't actually resigned.

This made Gray an enemy of many legislative Democrats, and his actions in 1869 were something they would never forgive – not even after he renounced the Republican Party and was elected as lieutenant governor as a Democrat in 1876; legally succeeded to the office of governor in 1880; or when he was duly elected governor as a Democrat in 1884. So, when Gray began talking to party leaders about his desire to become a U.S. Senator when the spot opened up at the end of 1886, legislative Democrats were hell-bent on denying him the office. The stage was set for one of the most infamous showdowns in Statehouse history, an event that would raise the profile of the pro tem and give the office some real power for the first time ... ❖

**Next Week: Part 2, The "Black Day" of the General Assembly. Foughty works in government relations for Indiana University. He blogs about Indiana political history at [CapitolAndWashington.com](http://CapitolAndWashington.com).**



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# Guns & Schools, from page 1

Quinnipiac University Poll, which began polling on gun control after the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012.

No, the Douglas HS atrocity was different. While the survivors of Sandy Hook were too young to articulate their fears and expectations of security, dozens of Douglas students boarded buses to Tallahassee and Washington to press policymakers. "Blood is being spilled on the floors of American classrooms and that is not acceptable," David Hogg, a senior at Douglas HS, said Thursday in an interview. "By working through bipartisanship and working through our differences... we can make an actual change. And who knows? Maybe we could save some children's lives."

A Washington march is scheduled for March 24, and a national school walkout is set for April 20, the 19th anniversary of Columbine.

## Indiana threats via social media

Across Indiana, which has yet to endure a modern deadly school shooting, an array of threats to schools popped up on social media. In the hours after the Florida murders, Carmel HS went into literal panic with social media reports of an active shooter and an estimated 40% of students skipped class the next day despite assurances from administrators. WTHR-TV reports showed terrified students; a number of parents were clearly unnerved. This past week saw the arrests of nearly 30 juveniles for threats to schools – mostly conveyed via social media – across the state, from Chesterton, Munster, Gary, and Griffith up in Northwest Indiana, to Loogootee, Evansville, New Albany, Madison and Sullivan down south, as well as South Vermillion HS, Kokomo, Muncie, Bloomington, North Miami HS and Columbus in between.

Such a spate of incendiary threats did not occur in the aftershocks of previous shootings. The threats transcended socio-economic classification, coming in both rich and poor schools, and in rural, suburban and inner-city schools. Were these just unwise jokes and hallway rivalries gone amok? Or were these ticking time bombs revealed?

A Ball State University study of 257 Midwestern parents reported in the Anderson Herald-Bulletin revealed that 36% of parents fear a gun incident in their local school as "highly likely." "Gun violence is a major issue among parents, who often have a limited grasp of potentially effective interventions to reduce such events," said Jagdish Khubchandani, an associate professor of health

science at BSU.

In reaction to the shootings, President Trump and Vice President Pence conducted a White House "listening session" attended by survivors of Columbine, Douglas and Sandy Hook siblings and parents. The president asked for a show of hands of those people who support the idea of arming teachers and those opposed. Some in the room supported the concept, others were opposed. "Certainly, it's controversial, but we'll study that, along with many other ideas," the president said. He mentioned minimum-age requirements for gun buyers and "hardening" school entryways.

By Sunday, a public activist and political response began to take shape. Mothers Demand Action drew big crowds in Fishers and Indianapolis while students and concerned parents marched in Fort Wayne. These events were measured in the hundreds,

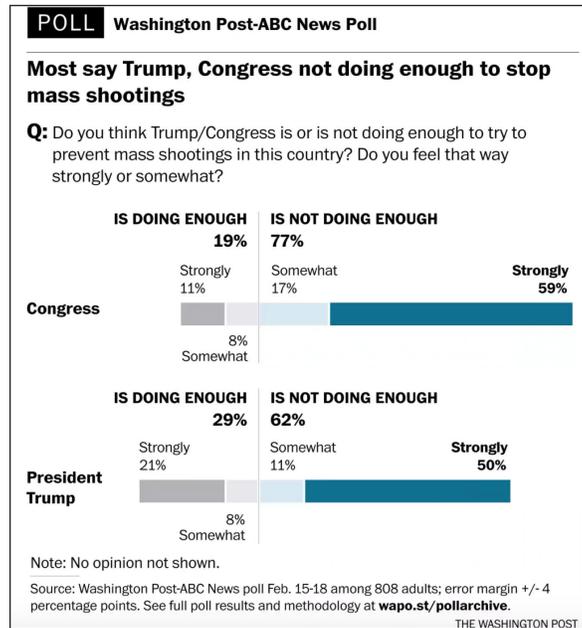
instead of the 20 or so participants that showed up at MDA events prior to Lakeland. Another big crowd gathered Monday in Lafayette. "These little kids have to hide under desks and be told to throw things at intruders and whatever it is they tell these kids," said Beth Sprunger, who is the Indiana State Chapter leader for Mothers Demand Action. "They shouldn't have to live like this. It's not fair to them." Homestead HS senior Panashe Chakabva told the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, "Thoughts and prayers are good, but they're no longer enough." She urged politicians – specifically U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, U.S. Rep. Jim Banks and President Donald Trump – to demonstrate leadership. "Do your jobs," she said.

## Arming teachers

In Indiana, State Sen. Jim Tomes was preparing legislation on a summer study committee about arming teachers.

Gov. Eric Holcomb, in a statement to HPI late Monday night, seemed to slam the door on that concept. "I firmly believe that we need to let our teachers teach and our law enforcement officials protect," said Holcomb, whose wife, First Lady Janet Holcomb, teaches gun safety courses. "There is a significant difference between teaching firearms safety/use/carry and taking a human life under tremendous stress. I'm sure there are some teachers, staff, etc. that would be very capable, but I believe a slow and deliberative approach would be absolutely necessary, approved by each local school board."

House Speaker Brian Bosma questioned arming teachers, telling the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, "I'm not certain about that one. I keep getting asked about that.



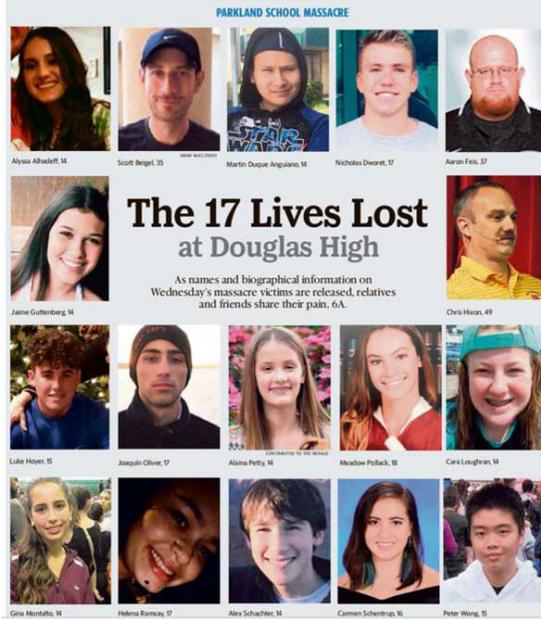
I know that's one of the solutions put on the table and it's worthy of discussion." Bosma's wife, daughter and other family members have been professional educators. The Indiana State Teachers Association opposes the concept, with ISTA vice president and middle school music teacher Keith Gambill saying educators need to focus on teaching. "To expect to add another layer on top of that, to also be law enforcement, is just a step that I personally am not willing to take and I believe that there are better solutions," Gambill said.

Lafayette Journal & Courier columnist Dave Bangert reached out to teachers to see how that concept was being gauged. West Lafayette High School teacher Randy Studt said he set out to find a colleague in his district who was ready to answer that call. "I'm not hearing about anyone who's interested," Studt said. "I'm hearing people are scared that this is even being mentioned. That includes people who say they'd be willing to retire first. But I'm also talking about people just starting their careers who are saying, 'That's not what I thought I was signing up for.' It's just such a bad idea."

Julie Sumrall, a Lafayette Jefferson High School English teacher, told Bangert, "I can't even believe we are at a point where this is even considered. It is an insult to our profession to even make such a suggestion, and it completely ignores the true problem we address facing in America today. It's amazing to me that there are people who would suggest arming a bunch of literature majors somehow protects our school children, while completely dismissing any talk of gun control."

And Travis Rubeck, sixth-grade teacher at Roosevelt Middle School in Monticello added, "I think that any society that has to arm its teachers is no longer a society. At that point, it's time to go back to the drawing board and try again. We are the only developed country that has this gun problem, and it's time we figure out why."

In Florida, Gov. Rick Scott and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, both with high ratings from the NRA, openly evolved. Scott said Friday that "everything was on the table" before unveiling a \$500 million "action plan" to prevent gun violence, according to Fox News. The Republican governor's plan does not include a ban on specific weapons, but it does aim to raise the minimum age to purchase a gun to 21 years old, establish law enforcement officers and mental health counselors in Florida's schools and vastly restrict mentally ill people from accessing firearms. "I want to make it virtually impossible for anyone who has had mental issues to use a gun," Scott said Friday. "I want to make it virtually impossible for anyone who is a danger to themselves or others to use a gun."



Gov. Scott's plan creates what he calls the "Violent Threat Restraining Order," which gives family members, social workers or law enforcement officials the ability to inform a court that a person's firearms may need to be confiscated or the person should be blocked from purchasing a weapon. Scott's plan – which provides \$450 million to schools – would place at least one law enforcement officer at every school. He suggested one officer for every 1,000 students be in place by the start of the 2018 school year.

Rubio, who was jeered at a CNN town hall last Wednesday, said he was now open to restricting magazine sizes and minimum-age purchase requirements. Politico reported: "It was a striking turnabout for Rubio, who never met a gun-rights bill he didn't vote for in the Florida Legislature and, later, in Congress. But Rubio said he wanted to prevent another massacre and said it was time for everyone to start rethinking their positions."

There were other changes that suggest a potential tipping point: Companies began severing ties with the NRA: Delta and United Airlines, First National Bank of Omaha, Enterprise Holdings (which includes Enterprise, Alamo and National car rentals), Wyndham Hotels, Best Western, MetLife, Symantec (Norton AntiVirus and LifeLock), SimpliSafe and Hertz. Bank of America told Axios that it will reexamine its relationship with banking clients who make weapons like AR-15s.

### Little policy shift from Indiana leaders

Hoosier political leaders were muted in response with virtually no policy shift. Vice President Pence issued the standard "thoughts and prayers" statement, saying on Twitter, "Our hearts break for all the victims and families affected by today's terrible school shooting in Broward County, FL. These students, teachers, administrators, & families will all remain in our prayers."

Gov. Holcomb ordered flags lowered. Pressed by WTHR-TV's Kevin Rader about a response, Holcomb said, "It's heart wrenching, painful to even imagine. No parent should ever have to endure this or wake up and think every day will be like yesterday and then have their child taken away forever." Holcomb said Indiana requires safety specialists at every school, a plan in place that should include safe perimeters around schools, meaning no one gets in who doesn't belong there. "We have to do everything we can to make it safe so that you have peace of mind when your child either walks to school, gets on that bus or drives to school that they are going to come home."

Rader asked Holcomb if that meant guards at school. "We already have them and we need to contemplate that, absolutely, and we need to make sure we have proper counseling available at schools."

## Holcomb statement to HPI

In a statement provided to HPI late Monday evening, Holcomb said, "The topic of school safety was front and center during the National Governors Association meetings I attended last weekend in Washington, D.C. Just like every governor I spoke with, one of Indiana's highest priorities will always be to assure students, teachers, and parents feel safe and secure at their local school. That's why I directed every state agency that has anything to do with school safety to coordinate efforts, communicate best practices and to have an open conversation so that we know where we excel and where we need improvement. Preventing future heart wrenching attacks in our schools, churches, and other large public assemblies will take a focused commitment from many disciplines, and I am as committed as ever before to the safety of our citizens."

Holcomb continued: "If we identify innovative and necessary changes where I have the authority to act – I will! Additionally, I know the members of our legislature will engage this issue over the summer, and I look forward to my continued partnership with each of them."

Holcomb suggested there is more preparation that needs to



occur. "Our local police chiefs, sheriffs, state troopers and our federal partners need access to accurate information, real time intelligence and an ability to share information all in an effort to prevent citizens with a mental illness and/or violent tendencies from having access to a firearm. My expectation is that there is coordination, collaboration and planning like never before. It is my hope that we do not live in fear, rather with an awareness like never before. We often look back on our school days as the best of times. I want that opportunity for every Hoosier kid and will work toward that end until my final day!"

Supt. Jennifer McCormick "implored" legislators and the Indiana congressional delegation to "undertake efforts to address school safety. These efforts must include passing policies which decrease risks, providing support for social and emotional programs to address mental and behavioral health, and approving budgets that increase resources."

The Indiana General Assembly has advanced legislation introduced prior to Parkland allowing guns in churches connected to schools and attempting to waive

lifetime-carry permit fees. Both have wide support, though out-going Senate President Pro Tem David Long said, "I think the status quo is more than satisfactory in the way we do permits and background checks right now. Now I know the theory is if I've already done it, do I have to do it for the next time I purchase a gun? I would say I don't think it's that intrusive." He noted that he was expressing his own opinion and not that of the majority caucus.

U.S. Sen. Todd Young, who took close to \$3 million in NRA campaign funds, said he was "Heartbroken by the news in Florida. Sending prayers to the students, faculty, families, first responders, and everyone affected by this horrific tragedy."

Young, pressed by the IndyStar's Matt Tully and the NWI Times' Doug Ross on the issues of guns and school safety, seemed strangely detached on the issue despite his policy wonk cred (see Columnists, page 19). Young campaigned in 2016 on his background as a Marine and Second Amendment supporter to the point of almost comic redundancy, yet seemed oddly distanced and at a loss for solutions when Tully and Ross continually raised the subject.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, up for reelection this year, said, "I am horrified by the tragedy in Parkland, Florida. We stand united with the students, parents, faculty, and staff of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Thank you to all of the first responders."

A Republican U.S. Senate debate between U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita, Luke Messer and Mike Braun a week ago did not include a single question about the Florida shooting and none of the candidates shifted on policy.

U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks told the Herald-Bulletin, "This has been a problem in our country for a long time. It's a complex issue. We need to make sure our schools are safe and reduce the gun violence."

Brooks said there is not a simple answer and no single change will solve the problem. She said Congress will look at tightening background checks for gun ownership. "Indiana is one of the few states that has a 'red flag' law where a gun can be taken away from someone who is believed to be a potential threat. We need to look at a similar law nationwide. Schools are a soft target. We need stronger entry and camera systems at the schools and look for faster ways to alert law enforcement." The technology is available, but it will take an investment by local property owners and government at all levels, Brooks said.

## Rights, security and costs

And therein lies the crux of a coming conflict when it comes to policy. Modern conservatism embraces unfettered Second Amendment rights and low taxes. But schools are now faced with the costs of adding school security guards, training and arming them, and "hardening" entries that would include bullet-proof glass, metal detectors, and restricted access points. School districts and their taxpayers are looking at millions of dollars in additional security costs at a time when many are already strapped.

The Brown County School Corporation was due to see \$6 million in bonds roll off its tax rolls this year from a previous referendum six years ago. But the Brown County Democrat reported that at a hearing on Feb. 15, a day after the Parkland massacre, it voted to use \$3 million of those bond revenues to harden school entries. So instead of seeing taxes decline, they will stay neutral. The bond would purchase protective sheeting for windows, place sturdy metal posts at entry ways to prevent vehicles from crashing through, and update technology and wiring for the current "buzz-in" system that screens visitors prior to entry.

"I am excited that this bond issue will be able to positively impact the safety and security of our kids. That's a gift we can give to the community," said Supt. Laura Hammack. "I imagine every parent is thinking about sending their child off today with a changed perspective."

Brown County schools have also received close to \$250,000 in counseling and mental health evaluation grants from the Lilly Foundation.

Brown County Sheriff Scott Southerland told The Democrat that his department trains for mass shootings, has its officers walk school hallways at night so they can gain familiarity with a facility and called the coming security upgrades "better than doing nothing." He questioned whether anything will stop a potential killer. "Those barriers stop the person that is going to obey the rules, but if they've got a gun and they don't care, they will just shoot the door one time, the glass falls down and they walk on through."

Scott Reske, a former legislator, DOE employee and Marine pilot, notes that a school corporation could spend millions to harden schools, but twice each day those buildings are surrounded by dozens of soft target school buses.

Southwestern HS in Shelby County received a grant that gives every teacher a key fob to be used in life-threatening situations, and upgrades include hardened doorways and a video system that can track an active shooter. The cost of such a system is in the \$300,000 - \$400,000 range.

Schools are faced with distinct cost escalation.

"When you look at the tragedy that had happened over the past several years, there is a lot of money that unfortunately goes into cleaning those situations up and providing something for those families. You cannot put a price on it, but you can most certainly look for the right solutions," Stephen Luce of the Indiana Sheriff's Association told Fox59. "The most important part is the communication that connects the school in real-time to the sheriff's dispatch or 911 center. You have a visual feed of the suspect in there and you can track the suspect or the person who is not supposed to be in there."

## Epilogue

With the modern U.S. political culture preventing virtually any Second Amendment restrictions, there are now between 270 million and 310 million guns in America, according to Pew Research. The number of guns manufactured in the U.S. nearly doubled between 2010 (5.5 million) and 2013 (10.9 million). The BBC reports that civilians owning guns in America stands at 89 per 100 residents, with civil war-torn Yemen second with 55. There are 30,000 Americans killed by guns every year, two-thirds of them suicides.

Total annual hospital expenses tied to gunshot wounds are estimated to be \$2.8 billion and the Guardian reports that annual cost of shootings in the U.S. is about \$45 billion. The U.S. has nearly six times the gun homicide rate of Canada, more than seven times that of Sweden, and nearly 16 times that of Germany, according to United Nations data. Quartz reports that just 3% of the U.S. population owns half of the guns.

The fact is there is no political will to push a "buy-back" program like Australia initiated in 1996 following a mass shooting. When Congress passed an assault weapons ban in 1994, it was allowed to expire in 2004.

Americans and Hoosiers are now faced with daunting school security issues that have already come to stadiums. Hoosiers now think strategically about where to sit in a movie theater and many have developed "situational awareness" when walking through a mall. There will be costs associated with "hardening" schools and other soft targets like BMV outlets. Costs associated with upgrading mental health services and counseling? Yet to be calculated.

President Trump has said "We have to do something," but counts the NRA as one of his biggest backers. He is erratic when it comes to staying on policy points, and it is unlikely Republican majorities in Congress will follow him beyond banning bump stocks. The NRA is a potent grassroots organizer for candidates it backs. The reaction to the Douglas atrocity will test its efficacy come November and beyond into 2020.

Will the change we've witnessed in the past 13 days be sustained? Or could another massacre at some unknown time and place in the days ahead crystalize these changes into a truly historic political and policy movement? That's seems to be more of an "when" question than an "if."

If such a catastrophe were to come to Indiana, the social scrutiny will be as intense as it has been in Florida, and a prelude to a potential political calamity for those inert and stuck in a pre-dated mindset. ❖



# Weighing rights, costs, and security

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – After the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks that killed more than 3,000 Americans, the United States responded with an array of security upgrades that we all endure today. We walk through metal detectors at



airports and government buildings, have our bags (and even shoes) scanned before flights. There are hardened barriers at gates to stop car bombers.

In 2011, the National Priorities Project estimated the costs of these security upgrades for defense and homeland security at \$7.6 trillion. The homeland security portion cost an estimated \$636 billion, footed, of course, by U.S. taxpayers.

As I wrote last week, in 2018 we are enduring a spate of school atrocities. I cited a figure of 18 incidents from the Everytown organization, that included any gun incident on or adjacent to a school campus. Out of that number we've had five resulting in injury or death. In the wake of the Douglas High School massacre in which 14 students and three teachers were murdered, we are witnessing an array of responses.

In Indiana, we've watched close to 30 students arrested in Griffith, Rushville, Kokomo, Columbus, Loogootee, Evansville, Bloomington, Muncie and Carmel for making violent threats aimed at a school, mostly through social media portals such as Facebook and Snapchat. The Indiana General Assembly is advancing bills on background check requirements, waiving lifetime handgun carry permit fees, and loosening restrictions for carrying guns into schools attached to churches. We've watched a number of our churches conduct drills to confront shooters.

**At the White House** on Wednesday, President Trump and Vice President Pence listened to victims and parents from Douglas and Columbine high schools, and Sandy Hook Elementary School as a jittery nation watched on live cable. Andrew Pollack's 18-year-old daughter Meadow was murdered at Douglas. "We protect airports. We protect concerts, stadiums, embassies, the Department of Education that I walked in today that has a security guard in the elevator," Pollack said. "How do you think that makes me feel? In the elevator, they got a security guard. 9/11 happened once, and they fixed everything. How

many schools, how many children have to get shot?"

President Trump is now considering banning bump stocks (used to efficiently kill 58 and wound more than 200 in Las Vegas), arming teachers, and bringing armed military veterans into schools. "Certainly it's controversial, but we'll study that, along with many other ideas," Trump said. He's also suggested investing in mental health screening and services with a price tag measured in the billions. And he wants to "harden" school security systems.

**U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio** appeared at a CNN town hall that night and suggested Americans need to rethink their positions on gun reform, just as Florida Gov. Rick Scott has said that "everything is on the table." Both Scott and Rubio are longtime NRA supporters. Rubio is now open to restricting the size of ammunition magazines, raising the age limit to buy rifles, and create gun violence restraining orders. Rubio, like many of the teachers I know, is against arming educators in schools.

America has evolved significantly in other areas of safety to reduce mayhem and costs. Since I was a kid, the U.S. government has placed restrictions on the sale and use of tobacco, mandated the installation and use of seat belts, lowered blood alcohol levels on drivers, toughened DUI penalties, placed protective guards on lawn mowers, and required health warning labels on our beer cans.

But when it comes to the Second Amendment, the prevailing governing notion is that it should not be restricted. And, when we did restrict the Second Amendment with the assault weapons ban of 1993 (the Brady Bill) with former President Reagan playing a key role in its passage, the law was later rescinded.

As Sept. 11 changed the America we knew, this wave of school atrocities will change us even further and it is going to create a clash of priorities. Unfettered Second Amendment rights are going to collide with another mantra of our predominant governing mode, which is low taxes.

**We now watch** frightened parents call for "hardened entries" for schools. This includes steel reinforced entries, vestibules and sally ports, the use of acrylic and polycarbonate bulletproof glass systems for

ground level floors, entryway metal detectors that range from \$3,000 to \$40,000 each. Many of these changes will come to voters via Indiana's school referendum process.

The Michigan-based firm Total Security Solutions notes on its website, "The reality of the education system is one where funding and budgets are getting cut. A lot of times, when we speak with a school administrator or an architect working on school building renovations, we discover the original scope of the project is unrealistic. Of course, this is driven by the fierce desire to protect children and give them a safe place to learn, but to do a job as scoped initially, schools would have to pay about \$1 million." It recommends fortified entry points.

My solution is classic asset management of a given



community. Have schools create office space for local police and sheriff deputies to do end-of-shift paperwork. Stagger police shifts to create less predictable arrivals. Have patrol officers "adopt" a school and make a point of making a presence at different times of the day.

## A lucky break for the gun industry

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The shooting at that Parkland, Fla., high school was a lucky break. It came just in time. Our poor gun industry has been facing tough times, with sales and profits down.



The money-making deals between gun merchants, the NRA and Congress were becoming less lucrative for one partner, the gun industry. A New York Times story on the plight of the industry, warns that Remington, one of our oldest and largest gun makers, has been talking of bankruptcy.

What is this country coming to?

Well, that Florida shooter could have acted just in time to make our gun industry great again. The story on gun industry woes pointed out that sales go up when there is talk of tighter gun regulations and then plummet when the threat seems to disappear.

Sales boomed during the Obama presidency. The ever-vigilant NRA warned that Obama was out to repeal the Second Amendment, take away guns and leave law abiding citizens without protection against criminals, terrorists and wild beasts.

**When President Trump** was elected, the NRA had a friend in the White House, somebody opposed to regulating guns or coal. The NRA couldn't send scare messages about Trump coming to take our guns. With no concern about their ability to buy guns, lots of people chose not to buy them.

Surveys also show that gun sales boom after mass shootings. Sales went up 50 percent after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. When it was reported that the killer used an AR-15-style rifle made by Remington, there was speculation that this could hurt Remington. But Moody Investors Service reported that Remington sales shot up 36 percent to \$1.3 billion in 2013.

Everything looked rosy for the gun industry back

**Freedom isn't cheap.** It comes with costs. Tax-payers are ultimately going to have to decide how much they want to foot and how safe they want to keep their children. ❖

in the fall of 2016 when polls showed Hillary Clinton likely to win the presidency. The NRA could use its most terrifying tactics to warn of Hillary coming to confiscate our guns.

**Alas, Trump won. Gun sales declined.** A gun industry gearing up for robust sales was left with unfulfilled projections. Luckily, that Florida shooting came just in time to renew fears of gun controls and spur sales. But a problem looms.

Even though a bunch of other school shootings failed to move Congress on guns, this latest shooting seems more threatening for those who want no meaningful control on the flow of assault rifles.

The victims this time were high school students, not the little first-graders at Sandy Hook. The Florida teens who witnessed the slaughter, sometimes of a friend, and had feared for their own lives as the bullets flew and flew, have a stronger voice. The little kids surviving the Sandy Hook massacre weren't old enough to articulate issues of background checks and NRA money for Congress. The older kids in Florida long had been warned of mass shooting danger in schools and then experienced it. In response, they are passionate, articulate and convincing.

They have been so good that fake news spreaders claim that the kids really are paid actors. Their message of "enough" has been taken up by others of their generation, others concerned about some gunman coming into their schools.

Will it have an effect? Probably not much. The NRA has the backing of some of the most supportive members of Congress that money can buy.

Maybe, however, there will be more effect long term, as these impressive teens, if they keep involved, will find and vote for members of Congress that money can't buy.

Immediate impact?

**Even if little is done now** to save lives, the mass shooting and talk of gun regulation is likely to do a lot for the gun industry. Sales climbing. Profits growing. Bankruptcies avoided.

And just in time. The Florida shooting was a lucky break for the gun industry. Not so lucky for the kids and teachers who were gunned down. ❖

**Colwell has covered Indiana politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.**

# No clear winner from first GOP INSen debate

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Following last week’s first Republican U.S. Senate debate, all three campaigns declared victory with Luke Messer citing the “adult conversation,” Todd Rokita proclaiming his advantage “could not be clearer,” and Mike Braun saying it was “crystal clear” who the “true conservative was” (i.e., him).

From our vantage point, there was no clear victor. The trio attempted to define themselves in ways we’ve already witnessed. Braun is positioned as the “outsider” non-politico while Rokita wants GOP primary voters to see

him as the only overt supporter of President Trump from the beginning, though he was not a definitive Trumper prior to the Indiana primary. Messer is trying to be the methodical tortoise by the end of this primary, seeking to be mini-

scathed for a fall match-up with the incumbent, Joe Donnelly.

If there were any inroads made, it came over the recent budget vote with Rokita lining up against. He chided Messer for voting for a budget bill that will supercharge the federal budget deficit to an estimated \$1.5 trillion. Messer’s riposte sought to reframe both his vote and Rokita’s support of President Trump: “It’s the choice our commander-in-chief gave us. He could be no clearer. You can’t run around and say you support the president and then not support him.”

Braun summed up the contrast in his closing statement, noting that Rokita, Messer and Donnelly were “all lawyers, who never really practice, career politicians,” adding, “We do not need more politicians in DC. I’ve spent a career putting up with the work of politicians and bureaucrats. These guys have spent their career putting up roadblocks.”

The debate, sponsored by Americans For Prosperity and moderated by conservative WIBC talk show host Tony Katz in the echo-laden Emmis Communications building lobby, was broadcast live and marks the substantive opening of the Republican primary season. All three candidates have about \$2.5

million cash on hand, though the mostly self-funding Braun launched his fourth flight of TV and radio ads earlier in the day. The two congressmen have not advertised statewide on cable or broadcast TV. This race appears to be wide open as the money indicates. A January internal poll by Rokita showed almost 60% of likely Republican voters were undecided. So, Tuesday’s contrasts were vital as Hoosier Republicans make a collective decision on May 8. In 2016, they chose Todd Young over fellow congressman Marlin Stutzman, and Young went on to drub the once invincible Evan Bayh. But in 2012, Republican voters tossed out U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, only to watch Treasurer Richard Mourdock kick away the seat that had been in GOP hands for 36 years to Donnelly, who is often described as the most vulnerable Democrat in the 2018 cycle.

Here is how the GOP trio stacked up on key issues:

**Taxes:** Braun shrugged off Rokita’s assault on his support for HEA1002 in 2017, saying that he opted for a well-researched highway infrastructure plan supported by Gov. Eric Holcomb and Republican legislative leaders. “I would never vote for a tax increase at the federal level,” he said, noting that “85% of my constituents said ‘fix the roads; don’t kick the can down the road.’” HEA1002 included fuel tax increases, but will pump billions of dollars into roads and bridges in the coming decade. Messer noted that he supported then-Gov. Mitch Daniels’ “Major Moves” Indiana Toll Road lease in 2005 that yielded \$3.8 billion. He said he would not support President Trump’s idea of a federal gas tax increase, saying, “When I was in the General Assembly, we were able to make a major investment without raising taxes.”

Rokita, one of two Hoosier Republicans to vote against the budget deal (U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth was the other), said, “I don’t vote for bills for which the money hasn’t been printed. It’s OK to say ‘no’ when ‘no’ is required. Last thing we should do is raise taxes.” Messer characterized the budget vote as a decision to fund the U.S. military, with Rokita retorting, “It’s a false choice.” Rokita added, “If you nominate one of these two, Joe Donnelly will be the tax cutter in the race.” As Rokita and Braun traded shots on HEA1002, Messer quipped, “You know who loves this discussion the most? Joe Donnelly.”

**Spending:** Braun made the first of three references to U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, saying that on federal spending, there’s little difference between



**Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita shake hands while Mike Braun makes his “outsider” point. (HPI Photos by Brian A. Howey)**

Democrats and the GOP in Congress on the issue. He says he appreciates the work of Sen. Paul, saying he had “backbone” and “discipline” adding that it will take “people who aren’t beholden to anyone” to constrain federal spending. Rokita said, “The difference between Democrats and Republicans is we’re telling Americans what the problem is” on spending. He blasted “RINO Republicans” for stopping a bill he sponsored to block-grant Medicaid.

**Health care:** Braun told one of his campaign trail staples, saying that he figured out how to save his 850 employees money by acting like the insurance companies do. He said the result has been flat-lined premiums. He said that neither congressman knows how to solve real problems. Both Rokita and Messer agreed that removing the Obamacare individual mandate was a critical move. Messer explained, “Obamacare has devastated Indiana families” with “\$1,000 a month on policies with a \$10,000 deductible. The individual mandate is one of the most onerous taxes.”

**Tariffs:** Braun departed from President Trump, who has imposed tariffs on solar panels and appliances saying, “I think if you start getting into tariffs, unless it’s something egregious one of your partners is doing ... you’ve got to keep your markets mostly free, and you’ve got to respond if one of your partners is abusing you. Over the years I’ve created more jobs than either one of these guys and I’m the one who knows how to do it. When it comes to tariffs and free markets, I understand it viscerally because I have to live with it.” Rokita was in Trump’s camp, saying, “Yeah, if it helps America, I wanna have tariffs.” Messer said, “What I hear from the president is he’s for free trade and fair trade.”

### Braun launches controversial ad

Braun released his fourth flight of television and radio advertisements, titled “[Lives at Stake](#)” on the day of the debate, high-lighting the recent incident in Indianapolis where Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson and Jeffrey Monroe were struck and killed by Manuel Orrego-Savala, an illegal immigrant who was driving drunk. “For too long, D.C. politicians have kicked the can down the road on illegal immigration,” said Braun. “It’s an absolute shame, and it needs to stop. Hoosiers can bet that in the Senate, I’ll stand with President Trump on building the wall, banning sanctuary cities, and finally ending chain migration.”

Deb Monroe, the widow of Jeffrey Monroe, was insulted, telling WTHR-TV’s Rick Van Wyk, “I think (Braun’s)



disgusting. That’s what I think. This has nothing to do with the immigration debate.” She said her late husband opposed “the wall” and was not a supporter of President Trump.

So, while the ad generated a spate of negative publicity for Braun overall, it probably won’t hurt him with a large percentage of Republican primary voters.

### Messer wants more debates

Messer has challenged his primary opponents to participate in two more debates before the Indiana Senate Republican Primary on May 8. “Debates give Hoosier Republicans a chance to hear from all of us and make their own decision on who they think is the best candidate to defeat Joe Donnelly in November,” Messer said. “Hoosiers ought to know the broken U.S. Senate and Joe Donnelly are standing in the way of President Trump’s agenda. I’m laser focused on defeating Joe Donnelly and eager to share our winning message with more Hoosiers.”

### Tax cut could cost Donnelly

Democrats’ early optimism appears less well founded in Indiana, where Democrat Joe Donnelly is facing a tough Senate reelection fight (Werner, [Washington Post](#)). The new law is rising in popularity as businesses in Indiana and elsewhere trumpet bonuses and bigger paychecks. And while Donnelly and fellow Democrats struggle to craft a consistent attack on the law, Republicans — boosted by outside spending from groups backed by the billionaire Koch brothers and others — are united in touting the tax cuts and slamming moderate Democrats who voted against them. The three Republicans vying to replace Donnelly hit that point repeatedly as they met on a debate stage last week. “That’s a great thing that people are getting some benefits,” the low-key Donnelly said in an interview at a coffee shop in downtown Indianapolis last week.

“Here’s the proposition that they’re not saying, but that’s the truth,” said Donnelly, 62. “We’ll have a thousand dollars out there. And you’ll get that. And in return — and this is the part that goes unspoken — we’re going to send your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren the bill for that. They will pay it with interest, repeatedly, year after year after year, much of it going to the Chinese and others.” “If you laid that out and said, ‘Will you sign up for this?’ not one person in my state would sign up for that,” Donnelly said. “Not one.”

### Donnelly critical of Pence

Sen. Joe Donnelly is not showing the same hesi-

tancy about criticizing the vice president as he has President Trump — even though Mike Pence is from Donnelly’s own state. “We thought we’d gotten rid of (Pence) — but now he’s coming back (to Indiana) with plans to attack Joe,” Peter Hanscom, Donnelly’s campaign manager, says in a fundraising appeal sent out Monday. “Hoosiers know better than anyone exactly how much damage Mike Pence can cause.”

**Congress**

**Democrats have huge edge in CNN Poll**

The 2018 midterm election is in 258 days. Democrats are very, very ready for it. Republicans? Not so much. That’s according to a new CNN/SSRS national poll, which suggests that Democratic voters are far more enthusiastic about the coming midterms than their GOP counterparts. A majority of registered Democrats -- 52% -- say they are either “extremely” (30%) or “very” (22%) enthusiastic about “voting for Congress this year.” For Republicans, 17% say they are “extremely” enthusiastic about voting this fall while another 23% say they are “very” enthusiastic. The poll finds 54% of registered voters say they back a Democrat in their congressional district, 38% say they back a Republican. That’s a shift in favor of the Democrats since January, bringing their advantage in a hypothetical generic matchup to about the same level as early 2006, a

year in which the party won control of both the House and the Senate. Here’s the big takeaway: Almost twice as many Democrats as Republicans are “extremely” into voting this November. And history tells us that, especially in midterm elections, the most enthusiastic and passionate voters usually vote. Everybody else, well, doesn’t.

Look back at 2010 -- a midterm election in which Republicans wracked up massive gains. In the final CNN poll before that election, 54% of registered Republicans called themselves “extremely” or “very” enthusiastic about voting. That was 20 points higher than the percentage of Democrats excited about voting in that same election.

**8th CD: Moss claims Bucshon accosted him**

8th CD Republican Congressional candidate Richard Moss released a statement Tuesday afternoon, following what he described as “an altercation provoked by Congressman Larry Bucshon.” The reelection campaign of Bucshon denies the incident happened, and referenced a February 1993 police report in which Moss was arrested in DuBois County for assaulting his wife. “The allegations in the Richard Moss letter are completely false,” said Bucshon campaign spokesman Andrew Hansen. “Richard Moss is projecting and based on his past arrest for domestic violence, it is not surprising he would be aggressive toward Dr. Buchson.” Moss described a Saturday campaign event sponsored by the Vanderburgh County Republican Party,

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saying, "Congressman Bucshon physically and verbally accosted me, showing himself to be vindictive, rude, and a classic bully. I find his behavior unacceptable. I will not be bullied by him or anyone and will continue to press the issues that are important to the people of Indiana's 8th district. Congressman Bucshon can't handle basic questions on his residency and voting record. There is no excuse for physical intimidation. The Congressman should face consequences for his actions." The battery affidavit dated Feb. 27, 1993, described an assault by Moss on his wife, Sing, saying, "In a rude, insolent or angry manner, (he) pulled her hair and shoved her down into some broken glass." It was filed in DuBois Superior Court on March 16, 1993.

**Most not aware of tax cut pay bump**

Most voters aren't noticing more money in their paychecks under the new tax law, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll. Just a quarter of registered voters, 25%, say they have noticed an increase in their paycheck, the poll shows. A majority, 51%, say they have not. Among employed voters — those working in the private and public sectors, plus those who are self-employed — a larger percentage, 37%, have noticed an uptick on their pay stubs. But 53% say they haven't. Self-identified Republicans are more likely to say they have seen a larger paycheck under the new law (32%) than Democrats (21%) or independents (22%).

**General Assembly**

**Election board ends 3 primary challenges**

Three Indiana House primaries are over before they started. State law says your party is the one you voted for in the last primary, unless the local party chairman gives you a mulligan. That rule has disqualified three would-be Democrat candidates who broke with their past practice to vote in the Republican primary in 2016. The state election board unanimously ruled the law is clear that they can't switch back as candidates in 2018 (Berman, WIBC). Joseph Lehman has run for judge and state representative five times as a Democrat. He was the only Democrat to file for the House seat of retiring Goshen Republican Wes Culver. He says he voted Republican because Democrats had hardly any contested primaries, and Lehman took a Republican ballot. That disqualifies him from the ballot. Muncie pharmacist Jim Hiatt had hoped to base his campaign on fighting the opioid epidemic. He says he forgot he'd voted Republican in 2016 when he filed to challenge Muncie Representative Sue Errington in the primary. Hiatt asked the board to let him switch to the vacant Republican primary, but the filing deadline earlier this month is also the deadline for other changes. The ruling leaves Errington unopposed. Also unopposed is Winchester Mayor Shon Byrum, who becomes the Democrat nominee for the seat of retiring Modoc Republican Greg

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Beumer. Two Republicans are seeking the nomination. The parties have until June 30 to recruit candidates for ballot vacancies.

**HD63: Lindauer seeking full term**

After being appointed to fill out the unexpired term of Mike Braun, District 63 State Rep. Shane Lindauer has filed for the Republican nomination for a full term in the legislative seat (Grant, Washington Times Herald). "It was always my intention to run for a full term even before I was caucused in," said Lindauer. "This has given me a chance to learn the ropes a little early." Lindauer currently serves on the roads and transportation, government reduction and natural resources committees. "It has been an honor and privilege to serve the people of District 63 in the Indiana General Assembly this past session," he said. "In the months ahead, I look forward to speaking and meeting with people to ascertain how to best serve our area. My goal is to be a conservative voice while focusing on issues that really matter to residents of District 63."

**HD63: Two Dems seek to challenge**

Daviess County Democrat voters will have a choice facing them this primary. Two men have filed as candidates for the nomination in Indiana House District 63. The winner will get to take on incumbent Shane Lindauer

who is the only Republican to file for the race. District 63 covers parts of Daviess, Dubois and Martin counties (Grant, Washington Times-Herald). One candidate for the Democrats is Joe Lannan of Loogootee. "I have not been involved in politics in the past, but recently we have been working closely with the Loogootee schools," said Lannan. "The more I dealt with the issues the schools face, the more I realized the 63rd District needed someone in the Legislature that was not looking for advancement or out to make some personal gains. Education is something that concerns this district and it is something the state representative can do something about. Indiana holds its teachers and schools to a high standard. It is time to support those schools with funding, pay increases for teachers and professional assistance in planning." Dennis Tedrow has also filed for the seat. He currently works at MasterBrands in Jasper. "I have always had an interest in politics, but I moved out of state for a while," said Tedrow. "When I returned, I reached out to the Dubois County Democrat party and decided to run for the House seat. I am very concerned about the 'voucher program.' Indiana is spending \$500 million for vouchers to send children to private schools. It is absolutely gutting our public-school funding. That has to stop." ❖

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# A powerful nation seeks to impact foreign elections

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – The ugly truth is finally out and now Americans will know that one of the most powerful nations in the world has acted egregiously to interfere in elections to try and influence the outcome. We now know that there



was not just interference in one election, but in several. We also know that the interference in elections did not occur in just one country. Several countries' free elections were affected by the perpetrator.

Finally, we have also learned that this election interference didn't just start with the 2016 elections. Electoral interference by this world power has been going on since the end of World War Two.

Who is this world power that would have the audacity to interfere in free elections?

The United States! That's who.

Before the good people of the United States start acting like a reformed drunk at a tent revival, we need to hold a mirror up and take a good look at ourselves and our past international conduct. Introspection such as this is not pretty and gives you an upset stomach at times. It also gives some credence to what Colonel Nathan Jessup declared in the movie *A Few Good Men*, "You can't handle the truth!"

So, before we good citizens of the bastion of democracy climb up on our high horses and launch a war of indignation, we should take a stroll down memory lane and take a gander at what history reveals.

Carnegie Mellon University political science professor Dov Levin has compiled a database of instances where the United States has attempted to interfere in the lawful elections of other countries. He believes that electoral intervention at the hands of the United States has occurred at least 81 times from 1946-2000. It takes a little time for the truth worm to come squiggling out of the woodwork.

**Professor Levin defines** intervention as "a costly act which is designed to determine the election results in favor of one of the two sides." Further, these acts may have been carried out in secret and include funding election campaigns of a specific candidate or party, dissemination of misinformation or propaganda, providing political expertise to one candidate or party and making public pronouncements, threats or providing or withdraw-

ing foreign aid. In short, being naughty boys to try and get what we want.

This whole climbing in the cesspool to teach swimming lessons experience got going in earnest during the 1948 Italian general election. And, as they say in hockey, "We shoot and score."

**The United States threw** everything we could at the effort to help elect Christian Democrats over the Communists in Italy. Bags of money to pay campaign expenses, political experts dispatched to help call the shots in the campaign, official government subsidies provided to pork barrel projects such as land reclamation, and open threats for an end to foreign aid should the Communists be elected. Can't get much more interfering than that.

When Haiti made an attempt at free elections after the overthrow of "Baby Doc" Duvalier, a U. S. ally, the CIA sought to derail the candidacy of Roman Catholic priest and presidential candidate Jean-Bertrand Aristide. When covert political interference wasn't enough to prevent Aristide, a proponent of liberation theology, from winning the election in a landslide, the CIA relied on the generals who were on its payroll to cast their own votes, ultimately overthrowing a duly elected president.

In 1996, the United States also directly interfered with the fledgling Russian elections. The Russian economy had been suffering under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and a return to the good old days of totalitarian rule was a distinct possibility. President Clinton endorsed a \$10.2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund directly linked to privatization, trade liberalization and other economic reforms that would move further along the road to capitalism. Yeltsin used the loan to bolster his popular support. He used the money for paying back wages and pensions and other vote inducing social spending.

**That same year, President Clinton** also engaged in attempting to sway the elections in Israel. Clinton desperately wanted to further the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. He feared that if the Likud Party won the election that Benjamin Netanyahu would scuttle much of the progress toward peace that had been made under the Labor Party's Shimon Peres. Clinton staged a very public peace conference at Sharm el Sheik to boost the popularity of Peres. Then, just one month before the election, Clinton hosted Peres at the White House in an effort to show the people of Israel who America was supporting. Three years later, Clinton dispatched political mastermind James Carville to Israel to provide election advice and counseling.

The United States also directly provided money and support to influence elections in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Yugoslavia, successfully swinging elections to our favored candidates. Mass murderer Slobodan Milosevic was defeated not by United Nations peacekeepers but by CIA hijinks.

And what about our former President Barack Obama and our current President Donald Trump? When Great Britain staged its monumental referendum on Brexit,

the exit of Great Britain from the European Economic Community, did these two men attempt to interfere with the process? Sure, President Obama stated publicly that Brexit would put Great Britain at the rear of the line for future trade talks. If that isn't a threat, I don't know one. Trump, on the other hand, publicly endorsed Brexit as a good thing for Great Britain. Two sides of the same coin in my opinion.

**Citing these examples** of United States interference in foreign elections is not done in an effort to excuse the Russian efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election. It is merely an effort to keep things in perspective and perhaps to shine a little light under the cupboard to watch the roaches run.

Because the hate factor is so great against Donald Trump, equal to the denial factor that Hilary Clinton could actually lose, the media has tried to de-legitimize our 2016 election as a Russian-interfered victory for their Manchurian Candidate. The potentates of propaganda are hard at work trying to destroy the presidency of Donald Trump by attempting to say that thirteen evil posters on Facebook and social media controlled the outcome of the election, despite the assertion in the Special Prosecutor's indictment that there is no evidence to support it.

What I am trying to say is that the United States acts in its self-interest around the world and if that self-interest requires meddling in foreign elections, we have and we will do it. As a people, most Americans want their government to act in our self-interest, but we don't want to know all of the details. It's kind of like we all know that the United States acquired most of the land west of the Mississippi by hook and by crook, with a little genocide thrown in to boot. And yet, we don't really want to know all of the gory details. Old Colonel Jessup was right, "We can't handle the truth!"

**I'll leave you with a couple** of questions for your consideration: Do you think that people in our government who willfully engage in the interference of lawful elections in foreign countries for the expressed purpose of acting in our nation's self-interest leave all of that hanky-panky at our borders?

Do you think that government officials who will tread on the freedoms of other countries to help us attain our objectives would never be tempted to use their positions to interfere in our own elections or to de-legitimize the election of someone they hated?

Time for me to go back down the rabbit hole. ❖

**Dunn is the former Howard County Republican Party chairman.**

## Pushing a predatory loan product

By **ERIN MACEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Despite a new poll showing that nearly nine in 10 Hoosiers want payday loan reform, the General Assembly is pushing forward with new a predatory loan product.

When the Indiana Institute for Working Families set its 2018 legislative agenda, we focused on modest and achievable policy solutions that would right the ship for Hoosier families who are underwater financially: Make sure



pregnant women in physically-demanding jobs can continue to work safely, because many lack sick days or family leave. Take small steps to fix problems with our nutrition assistance and TANF programs. Get more kids into prekindergarten classrooms and adults into educational programs that lead to higher-paying jobs.

Many of the bills we hoped to see advance never received a hearing have died. And Instead, there's momentum on a different "solution" for struggling working families: bigger, longer payday loans.

Indiana is one of several states that crafted a payday loan law in the early 2000s. Payday lenders were given a limited exemption from our criminal loansharking law to make two-week loans under the premise that these loans would be expensive to make due to their short-term, one-time nature. However, research is now clear: these loans, which top out at 391% APR, are almost never a two-week, emergencies-only deal. Instead, lenders target families they know won't be able to pay the loan back and still afford their other expenses, thereby creating a steady stream of repeat customers. In fact, the typical borrower takes 8-10 loans in a year, paying more in fees than she originally borrowed.

**Hoosiers clearly understand** the problems with this business model. In a January 2018 Bellwether Research & Consulting poll, 84% of Indiana voters characterized payday loans as more harmful than helpful. Nearly nine in ten expressed a desire to see them capped at 36% APR, even after hearing pro-industry arguments. This is consistent with other polls across the country showing that both the public and payday borrowers want to see more reform and regulation of this industry.

Instead of listening to Hoosiers, the Indiana House has voted to give payday lenders a new product line. HB 1319 increases the amount of money payday lenders can offer and lengthens loan terms up to one year. If this bill becomes law, a family bringing home \$16,000 a year could

qualify for a \$1,500, one-year loan, paying \$1,598 in fees along - more than a month's take-home pay.

**In discussions with lawmakers**, we have heard all manner of good intentions expressed: We need to ensure that families can build credit, solve transportation challenges, increase financial literacy, heat their homes, and pay their bills. We absolutely agree that these are problems that need to be addressed. But expanding loans that are known for driving borrowers into a stressful

spiral of debt that can end in bankruptcy or homelessness is like selling the boat to buy its fuel. Righting the ship for families requires policies that address the root causes of financial difficulties.

Did I mention we have a policy agenda for that?



**Erin Macey, PhD., is a policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families.**

## Why do we even bother with finance laws?

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – I wonder sometimes why Indiana even bothers with campaign finance laws. Current finance laws outline what is legal in terms of candidates spending the money they raise. The laws talk about what's legal, but say nothing about what's ethical.



In terms of what's legal, the law pretty much says any expenditure related to a political campaign is OK. And if a candidate decides to bow out of elected politics, the law is clear on what he or she can do with the money left in their campaign accounts. Basically, the candidate can either give that money to a charity or another candidate.

There was a renewed focus recently in terms of what's ethical.

**It was reported** that Portage Mayor James Snyder last year paid \$15,000 to his wife for unspecified campaign services. He also paid \$41,000 to two attorneys who are representing him in a public corruption case. While the money paid to the lawyers seems questionable, the money paid to the wife raises ethical questions. Campaign finance laws prohibit a candidate from supplementing his own income with the money received from donors. But, isn't money paid to the wife the same as supplementing his own income? I suppose it well can be, but perhaps the wife earned every bit of what she received.

The Snyder case brings to mind the situation with Hammond Mayor

Thomas McDermott Jr. and his wife, Marissa McDermott. It was reported in 2013 that McDermott had paid his wife \$300,000 over 10 years to take care of his campaign finance records. That is a tidy sum of money for what generally is a minimal amount of work. It also is a nice addition to the McDermott family income. It is all legal, but is it ethical? Marissa is now Lake Circuit Court judge and is off her husband's payroll.

**The question is whether** the Legislature should revisit campaign finance laws to shut out the wives and husbands. Or should it be left up to the voters to decide what is ethical the next time the candidate is on the ballot?

I'm sure the candidates would prefer the status quo because voters and donors rarely hear about how candidates spend their donations absent controversy. ❖

**Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune.**

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# Uncertain future for payday lending bill

## Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – The Republican leader of the Indiana Senate says he is opposed to legislation to expand payday lending and allow for rates more than triple what



is currently permitted under the state's criminal loansharking law ([Associated Press](#)). "It's treading water and the water is pretty deep," Republican Senate leader David Long of Fort Wayne said Thursday, referring to a payday

lending bill that narrowly passed the House last month and is now before the Senate. "... I'm not a big fan of it, personally." It's a felony under state law to offer loans with an annual percentage rate greater than 72 percent, according to the Indiana Department of Financial Institutions. But the new payday lending bill would lift that, allowing payday lenders to charge annual percentage rates as high as 222 percent on short-term loans between \$605 and \$1,500, an analysis by Indiana Institute for Working Families found.

## Study of child services resolution passes

Senate committee on Monday passed a resolution to have a study committee investigate the state's Department of Child Services this summer (Fitzgerald, [State-house File](#)). Senate Resolution 14, authored by Sen. Eddie Melton, D-Merrillville, will bring legislators from both sides of the aisle together to study recent issues that led the former DCS director to resign late last year.

## Pregnant women bill sent to governor

Pregnant women across Indiana soon may be more likely to deliver their babies at a facility that's best suited to meet the health needs of both mother and child (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The General Assembly last week advanced to the governor's desk Senate Enrolled Act 360, which directs the State Department of Health to establish a program to certify the perinatal levels of care available at Indiana hospitals and birthing centers. National medical groups have established four levels of care: Level I, basic care of an uncomplicated pregnancy; Level II, specialty care for higher risk pregnancies; Level III, advanced care for complex maternal or fetal conditions; and Level IV, regional comprehensive perinatal health center.

## Computer class bill advances

The Indiana House Ways and Means Committee on Monday passed a bill that would require all Indiana public high schools to offer computer science elective courses to students by 2021 (Colombo, IBJ). The bill also requires, starting in 2021, K-12 public schools to include

computer science in their curriculum. The bill passed the committee unanimously and heads to the full House for possible amendments and votes. The legislation is an "important bill for the students of Indiana," said bill author state Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Centerville.

## Senate approves unpaid leave bill

An Indiana senator is again pushing to study the feasibility of a voluntary paid family and medical leave program (Lyons, [Post-Tribune](#)). Sen. Karen Taillan, D-Portage, introduced a resolution that asks the Indiana Legislative Council to create a study committee to explore the creation of a voluntary paid family and medical leave program for Indiana employers, which the Senate advanced to the House of Representatives on Monday. "This is a study committee for a voluntary program," Taillan said. Taillan's proposed study committee would consider creating a program for Indiana employers to offer paid parental and medical leave modeled on the unpaid leave offered under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

## Bills strengthen anti-bullying effort

The apparent under-reporting of bullying incidents across Indiana has prompted a legislator to propose a bill to strengthen already-required school reporting (Loughlin, [Terre Haute Tribune Star](#)). A separate bill calls for a district's disciplinary rules to address cyberbullying not only through use of computers, but also through use of cellular phones or other wireless devices. Rep. Greg Porter, D-Indianapolis, authored House Bill 1356, which would give the state Department of Education the authority to audit the accuracy of bullying data submitted by schools. It provides the state department must report discrepancies of an audit on its website. State Rep. Wendy McNamara, R-Evansville, has authored a school safety bill that deals with both bullying and human trafficking. It adds cellphones to the definition of cyberbullying and requires the Department of Education, state Board of Education and school corporations to clearly identify resources for prevention and reporting of bullying or cyberbullying.

## Baby box proposal added to abortion bill

A bill to expand access in Indiana to baby boxes won't advance any further this session (Smith, [Indiana Public Media](#)). Baby boxes are meant to be a more anonymous way for people to drop off unwanted newborns. Still, the expansion effort is alive and well – in a separate piece of legislation. Lawmakers added the entire bill's language to a separate measure: an abortion bill that would require health care providers to report a long list of complications from abortion, if they occur. Rep. Martin Carbaugh (R-Fort Wayne) is the baby box bill's sponsor. He says he's confident there won't be any issues – even though abortion legislation attracts more opposition. The abortion bill – with the baby box expansion provision – is currently on the House floor. ❖

**Matt Tully, Indystar:** Sen. Todd Young is one of the more thoughtful, deep-thinking and impressive politicians serving today. He is a Republican who spends a lot of time trying to bring smart ideas forward to help struggling Indiana communities, including communities that don't vote much for Republicans, while also keeping a close senatorial eye on international matters. In a time of dysfunctional, toxic politics, he offers a calm and reasonable voice and argues that hard work and collaboration can get us out of this current mess. "This is such a great time to serve," he said. "... It's better to serve in tougher times." So if anyone can do better on the issue of gun violence, it is Todd Young. But then there is the issue of gun violence. As we talked, only a few days had passed since the nation's most recent high school shooting. The next day, Young would visit a struggling Indianapolis community that has experienced more than its share of gun violence. Yet on this issue, Young is not nearly the engaged thought leader he is on so many other issues. In fact, bring up the issue and he sounds unusually uncomfortable. A man who consumes information seems to shrug and say he doesn't know enough to say much. A politician who seems desperate to tackle so many tough issues comes across as lethargic on this one. "We need to learn the facts," he said, as if gun violence is a new issue. ❖



**Doug Ross, NWI Times:** U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., describes himself as a problem-solver, and he's right. Young said he pushed for allowing dialysis centers to be a single point of contact for multiple types of medical care. That makes sense; help patients get additional care while already at a medical facility to undergo treatment. He's also pushing his "fair shot" agenda to help people who have been adversely affected by the changing economy. Everyone needs a fair shot at success. That's problem-solving. But he also needs to address the plague of school shootings happening across the United States. What should be the federal government's response? In particular, how should Congress respond? How can this problem be fixed? The Times Editorial Board asked Young about this issue last week when he visited Northwest Indiana. Young, a Second Amendment supporter, acknowledges the dilemma of balancing a freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights with a public safety crisis. "The most important thing is to make sure our kids are safe when we send them off to school," he said. Federal money is available for technology to make schools safer, and potentially Congress could strengthen those programs, he said. Young noted that schools are required to conduct fire drills to prepare students for that emergency. "I'm not sure of the last time I heard of a fire in a school," he said. "It's a lot less common." Active shooter drills, even if implemented, aren't enough. Young is smart to seek clarity on probing questions to provide the right answers. Should a short-term mental health issue disqualify a person from buying

a gun? "Maybe, maybe not," he said. "That's something that needs to be discussed." Here in the Region, threats, possible threats and rumors of threats have been reported in multiple school districts in recent days. The fear of school shootings has everyone on edge, as it should. Young, the problem-solver, has a lot of work cut out for him. ❖

**George W. Bush, Wall Street Journal:** Billy Graham was, with C.S. Lewis, one of the 20th century's most influential figures in evangelicalism. I never had the honor of meeting Lewis, but I did know Billy, who died last week at 99. He changed my life. I first met him on my grandmother's porch in Kennebunkport, Maine, in 1985. In her 80s, she was frail but sharp. They sat together and Billy held her hand while talking about the Bible. Later she described it as one of the most peaceful days of her life. Soon after, I had my own personal encounter with Billy. As I wrote in "Decision Points," he asked me to go for a walk with him around Walker's Point. I was captivated by him. He had a powerful presence, full of kindness and grace, and a keen mind. He asked about my life in Texas. I talked to him about Laura and our little girls. Then I mentioned something I'd been thinking about for a while—that reading the Bible might help make me a better person. He told me about one of the Bible's most fundamental lessons: One should strive to be better, but we're all sinners who earn God's love not through our good deeds, but through His grace. It was a profound concept, one I did not fully grasp that day. But Billy had planted a seed. His thoughtful explanation made the soil less hard, the brambles less thick. Shortly after we got back to Texas, a package from Billy arrived. It was a copy of the Living Bible. He had inscribed it and included a reference to Philippians 1:6: "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." ❖

**William Kristol, Weekly Standard:** In a short, powerful piece in National Review, [Rick Brookhiser](#) concludes that "the conservative movement is no more. Its destroyers are Donald Trump and his admirers." Looking around me in early 2018, I can't disagree. This is cause for lament, and lament Brookhiser does, as I do. But in the midst of your sorrows, you of course realize: Movements grow old. They eventually die. Bill Buckley founded the American conservative movement in 1955. Can a political movement reasonably be expected to thrive and retain its vigor for more than 60 years, for more than three generations? I'm reminded of Abraham Lincoln's great speech on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," delivered when he was 28 years old in 1838—slightly more than six decades after the American Revolution. Lincoln lamented the fact that the memories of the revolution were fading, and with them the attachment to its principles. ❖

## Holcomb adds 7 disaster counties

INDIANAPOLIS – Gov. Eric J. Holcomb today added seven counties to the disaster emergency he declared Feb. 24 in response to widespread flooding and infrastructure damage caused by sustained heavy rainfall. The governor signed a new executive order (attached) to include Benton, Clark, Crawford, Floyd, Jefferson, Spencer and Warrick counties—in addition to Carroll, Dearborn, Elkhart, Fulton, Lake, Marshall, Perry, St. Joseph, Starke, Switzerland and White counties—making 18 total counties covered by this disaster emergency declaration so far. The disaster declaration means the state Department of Homeland Security can take necessary actions to provide expanded emergency services and is a step the state is required to take to request assistance from the federal government. The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated Thursday morning and continues to maintain a statewide operating picture concerning the status of the ongoing flooding and respond to requests for assistance from local officials. The EOC has directly assisted counties by coordinating the delivery of over 700,000 sandbags, two water pumps, heavy equipment and vehicles, labor crews, traffic control, UAV photography and subject matter expertise on disaster response and recovery.



## Polar melt is stunning scientists

WASHINGTON — The sun won't rise at the North Pole until March 20, and it's normally close to the coldest time of year, but an extraordinary and possibly historic thaw swelled over the tip of the planet this weekend ([Washington Post](#)). Analyses show that the temperature warmed to the melting point as an

enormous storm pumped an intense pulse of heat through the Greenland Sea. Temperatures may have soared as high as 35 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) at the pole, according to the U.S. Global Forecast System model. While there are no direct measurements of temperature there, Zack Labe, a climate scientist working on his PhD at the University of California at Irvine, confirmed that several independent analyses showed "it was very close to freezing," which is more than 50 degrees (30 degrees Celsius) above normal.

## Supreme Court passes on DACA

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday declined an unusual White House request that it immediately decide whether the Trump administration can shut down a program that shields some 700,000 young undocumented immigrants from deportation ([New York Times](#)). The move meant that the immigrants, often called "Dreamers," could remain in legal limbo for many months unless Congress acts to make their status permanent. The Supreme Court's decision not to hear the administration's appeal was expected, as no appeals court has yet ruled on the issue. The court's order was brief, gave no reasons and noted no dissents. It said it expected the appeals court to "proceed expeditiously to decide this case."

## Carmel board approves mosque

CARMEL — The Carmel Board of Zoning Appeals approved a proposal to build a mosque in the city with a 3-2 vote Monday night ([WIBC](#)). The vote came at the end of a meeting that lasted more than five hours, with about 200 residents getting to speak on the issue at the Palladium. The board was deciding whether the plans for the Islamic Life Center are compatible with zoning requirements.

The proposal is for the mosque to be built on five acres at 141st Street and Shelborne Road.

## Gun control forum draws big crowd

LAFAYETTE — Better background checks. That is what West Lafayette Police Chief Jason Dombkowski sees them as the best, and possibly only, solution to prevent mass school shootings ([Lafayette Journal & Courier](#)). Dombkowski's remarks Sunday came as he answered questions from more than 50 Greater Lafayette residents who wanted to explore how to prevent and reduce gun violence, especially in schools. The residents packed the Tippecanoe County Public Library's downtown branch for a Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America local chapter meeting, its first after a mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, on Feb. 14. "We never had a crowd like this," said Kathy Parker, a local leader of the gun control group.

## Opioid deaths likely undercounted

WASHINGTON — New research from the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the IU Public Policy Institute shows Marion County, and likely the entire state, have been dramatically under-counting opioid-involved deaths (Runevitch, [WTHR-TV](#)). They partnered with the Marion County Coroner's office to study the numbers and say better tracking will lead to better treatment and fewer deaths. IU researcher Brad Ray has been digging into the numbers. He says Marion County, and likely all of Indiana, has been grossly under-counting its opioid deaths. "So about 80% of the deaths we code as 'unspecified' actually had an opioid present in them. If we call those opioid involved deaths, which we should, we would have a much higher number of opioid overdose deaths in Marion County and our state," Ray explained. How much higher? Sometimes more than double.